

This is BILK Nr. 84 for July 1998. BILK is published bi-monthly by Ulrich Magin, Augustastr. 85, 76437 Rastatt, Germany. Subscription is 15 DM for Europe and 20 DM for the rest of the world.

BEHEMOTH

- Loch Ness: Everybody using the term Nessie may run into problems with the American firm RLP Enterprises of Las Vegas that has copyrighted the name "Nessie", see "Die Rheinpfalz", 28 April 1998; see also Fortean Times 109, p. 7. The article also refers to the battle of locals against the large visitor centre to be built at Urquhart Castle, the discussion may be followed through Andreas Trottmann's excellent "Loch Ness Newscipping Service". Also about the centre and about the surgeon's photograph as well is a confused piece (I couldn't make head nor tail of it - what exactly is he trying to say?) by Loren Coleman in Fortean Times 110, p. 45.

- Giant worms: The Daily Telegraph, London, 12 June 1998, p. 29, in an obituary for Sir David English, the late editor of The Daily Mail, includes a memory by journalist Alan Watkins on how he had an assignment around January 1961 in New York to cover an unusual story: "Quite early one Saturday morning we both went into our respective offices ... to find exited cables awaiting us from London. There were brief reports there that a man had returned to New York from the Peruvian Andes accompanied by a giant earthworm. This bizarre creature was, it appeared, some six feet long and almost a foot in diameter. It reposed in an earth-filled box, perhaps several boxes, in the explorer's apartment. Could we visit it; interview him; above all, secure pictures of the giant Peruvian earthworm? No expense, we were given to understand, need be spared in the enterprise." Both journalist didn't want to go, Watkins himself being afraid of snakes. English knew the answer: "Clearly we must each send cables to our London offices saying that the explorer was denying access to his earthworm. It was of a sensitive nature, specially where journalists and photographers were concerned. ... This we proceeded to do. In the way of newspapers, the giant earthworm was quickly forgotten. ..." This could be an interesting lead for Karl Shuker to follow up, as he has described a similar creature in his very interesting article on the Mongolian death worm in Fortean Studies 4.

- Bibliography: The "taz", 9 May 1998, p. 15, has an interview with Redmond O'Hanlon on his search for dinos in Africa. Much of interest, but no mention of the beast; snake in a shell, Peru (Fortean Times 111, p. 16); expedition to Lake Seljord, by Jan-Ove Sundberg, the guy who once saw a landed UFO at Loch Ness, as described by FSR and Holiday (Fortean Times 111, p. 17); floods at Lake Champlain (Fortean Times 111, p. 61); giant anaconda story by Fawcett could be misidentification (Fortean Times 109, p. 55); for the second time within a month, an iguana was caught in Munich, Germany, on the morning of June 16, 1998. The iguana was 1.2m/4ft in length. (taz, 17 June 1998, p. 20)

ISIS

- Bibliography: Crocodile men of Congo, Fortean Times 109, 4/98, p. 6; review of Scott Corrales' chupacabra book in Fortean Times 109, p. 56; depiction of a woman with a serpent's tail in a bas-relief on the temple of Mahabalipuram, India, identified as animal genetically engineered by ancient astronauts (Walter-Jörg Langbein: Tempel und Götterfahrzeuge in Indien, Ancient Skies 3/1998, p. 20).

- Carlisle, England: Paul Screeton describes in his book "Quicksilver Heritage" (London: Abacus 1977, p. 230-231) how, in the 1960s or 1970s, he came upon an elemental on the road from Kingmoor to Carlisle. He had accidentally kicked a quartz stone (of importance in earlier versions of geomancy) when he "saw something move a yard or so in front of me. The thing lept like a frog

and was frog-shaped, but about three feet high. It was brown but its form was hazy, difficult to describe, but the effect was not dissimilar to a television screen when the lines go crazy." Similar reports from America have been interpreted as a kind of unknown amphibian (Levelland frog), aquatic bigfoot (The-tis Lake) or UFO occupant (chupacabras).

LEVIATHAN

- England: In the Natural History Museum, London, until 13 September 1998, you may visit the "Myth & Monsters" exhibition. It contains amusing life-like models of a cyclop, a yeti, a chimaera and other fabulous beasts and brief references to cryptozoological monsters. The best exhibit, for my taste, was a large ribbon fish conserved in a jar. It was caught in February 1981 at the English east coast. However, as we now know, ribbon fish float vertically in the sea and are rather fragile, so that they can hardly be mistaken for a sea serpent, as the legend accompanying the fish claims. Biologist and crypto-zoologists prefer neat and easy answers, but as the sea serpent is not simply a product of misinterpretation, these simple solutions hardly ever apply.
- Scotland: Skye has not only a Loch na Beiste near Kyleakin, but famous waves of sightings from Mallaig to Soay, especially the 1872 flap. I found this entry in a book on Skye: "An occasional walrus has possibly been stranded on the shores of Skye and given rise to the tale of a 'beast', for example one in Black Bay, Dhubaig, Loch Greshornish; off Sleat, Waternish and the tip of Trotternish. It has been claimed that a stray narwhale may account for the old tales of unicorns. Some Soay fishermen told a hair-raising tale of a sea-serpent seen in Loch Scavaig in the early twentieth century." F. C. Sillar and Ruth Meyler: Skye. David & Charles: Newton Abbot 1973, p. 69. The last sentence possibly relates to the Soay beast 1959, a typical leatherback turtle.

KRAKEN

- Sea of Cortez, Mexico: photo of an encounter between a diver and a giant Humboldt squid in Fortean Times 111, p. 20.
- New Zealand: For some years now, New Zealand has become a sort of el dorado for giant squid researchers. Now there is a long article in the "National Geographic", June 1998, pp. 106-117, by Thomas B. Allen, "Deep Mysteries of Kaikoura Canyon". It is a very journalistic piece on the search for architeuthis, but it mentions the famous 60ft 1880 giant squid which stranded in New Zealand, and adds that "a year before our expedition" (which itself is not dated, so I assume this reference to mean either 1996 or 1997) three dead giant squids were found in New Zealand waters. One of them was 26 ft long. Nice pictures, though.

USO & UFOS OVER MONSTER LAKES

- Namibia: A TV documentary shown on German TV channel ZDF on 26 April 1998 ("Höllenfahrten - Schiffbruch an der Skelettküste") reported on the stranding of the "Dunedin Star" at the Skeleton Coast, Namibia, in November 1941. The "Dunedin Star" had sailed the Atlantic from London, bound for South Africa. A survivor interviewed by the programme reported that, as this was wartime, there was constantly a man on the lookout. During the journey, the posts reported "many sightings" of German submarines, but "they were all false alarms". Needless to say, war nerves can be blamed for these sightings of submarines that did not exist (or the unguarded ship would have been sunk). Compare this situation with sea serpent watchers at Loch Ness and the Swedish looking for Russian subs in the 1980s.
- Washington, USA: Early in January 1998, a large bolide crashed into the Columbia River at Kennewick, WA. Water splashed in spray when the meteor entered the river. (Cenap Report 248, p. 60-61)
- Bariloche, Argentina: The story of the UFO invasion around Nahuel Huapi, Argentina's most famous monster lake, continues. Sometime around April 98,

the "Spiegel" reported that for many US stars - f.e. Sylvester Stallone or Henry Kissinger - it is now fashionable to have a house in "South America's St Moritz" for ski holidays. The place (with a major airport and holiday resort) is rather less off-the-beaten-track than monster hunters assume. Not only stars, but also star people come there often. A dozen witnesses observed a flying saucer over the city of Bariloche on the lake shore in April 1998 and phoned police and radio stations. They described four large shiny discs. One was the mother ship, the others departed from it or returned to it, Sara Salivar reported. They were completely soundless but whenever they grew brighter electricity failed in the houses. (taz, 15 April 1998, p. 20; Bild 15 April 1998, p. 10; JUFOF 3/1998, p. 93). This sounds very much like the reflections on a cloud cover of the bright beams by disco light machines which have become the number one UFO stimulus in Germany. They might have been introduced to amuse the people from America, and if the infrastructure of the local electricity plant was not sufficient, this could also explain the loss of electricity. By the way - with the Americans coming, have the locals become bored with their lake monster? See previous Bilks for other alleged UFO sightings at Nahuel Huapi, and also my article in Fortean Times 92.

- Barents Sea: First we had the Russian subs off Sweden, now the Russians complained early in May 1998 that American subs violate their territory. According to the "Spiegel" 20/1998, 11 May 1998, p. 141, Russia claimed that on December 4, 1997, an American Los Angeles-class sub closed in on a Russian Taifun-sub as it fired 20 nuclear rockets. The US sub came as close as 6 kilometres and didn't react to Russian orders to leave. The Russians threw water bombs on it which detonated but failed their target. US military spokespeople gave no comment.

- North Sea: An unidentified object the size of a battle ship has been detected by Dutch and English radar, according to the Daily Mail, quoted in Bild, 28 April 1998, p. 10. The British MoD denied that such radar data existed, but the newspaper's journalist David Derbyshire said they lied and that the data would be presented to scientists early in June.

- Lake Champlain: Like Nahuel Huapi, Lake Champlain has its share of UFO and USO reports. The most famous is the Burlington UFO of 1907 which is discussed at length by Joseph Trainor in "Fortean Studies" 4, p. 132. Fort's account of a "torpedo-shaped thing" is false, as the contemporary reports show. It was a thunderstorm and a ball lightning incident. Lake Champlain is also the site of an abduction of two young men on 7 August 1968, covered in some detail in Johannes Fiebag's recent book "Von Aliens entführt" (Düsseldorf: Econ 1997, p. 71-83) Fiebag's treatment reflects his gullible belief in ancient astronauts. Critics are always paid by the US government or are "irrational deniers of the most important event of human history". That Lake Champlain is also a monster lake evades him, as do all psycho-social questions which are so utterly important in UFO research.

- North coast of Norway: Net incidents (when a giant submarine something sinks a trawler) are usually blamed on UFOs (by cultists), American and British submarines (by the Irish) or on Soviet subs (by the Skandinavian). Now, Fortean Times 109, p. 6, contains a story where herring were the culprits: The trawler "Steinholm" was sunk around January 1998 when a school of herring in her net simultaneously dove toward the bottom of the sea. How many "unidentified submarine" reports are due to clever fish?

MARINE FORTEANA

- Japan: The "Welt am Sonntag", May 10, 1998, p. 42, contains a large article on the alleged submarine pyramid off Yonaguni, Ryukyu Islands, near Okinawa, Japan. It lies in a depth of 25m, is 150m wide, 200m long and 90m high (does that mean the pyramid's platform is 25m below sea level, or what?). Prof.

Masaki Kimura, geologist at Ryukyu University, believes the rock was erected by humans after his investigation of the site. "One proof is that there is no erosion at the base of the rock." A flat road appears to lead around the step pyramid, and a staircase with regular steps over 1m high leads to the summit platform. We encounter Robert Schoch, geologist of Boston University, who says the site could not have been formed by water erosion, "at least I know of no rock formation that is as regular as this". Schoch wants to visit the site in April, and believes it is 10 000 years old. Schoch seems to be determined to prove early technological cultures, it was him who dated the Sphinx to 10 000 years old as well, so I suspect we will encounter his name again and again in the future. What else will he find to be 10 000 years old? Is he really a serious scientist or one of America's new age clowns? Close to the main pyramid, there are said to be several small step pyramids. Japanese hail the pyramid as the oldest building on earth (Japanese archaeology is not a neutral science, such as Western, but exists to glorify Japan). The pyramids are supposed to have sunk gradually after the ice age or by earthquakes. But no matter what way our discoverers prefer, they remain adamant that the site is artificial and 10 000 years old, a time when only hunters and gatherers lived in the region. Enter the usual suspects, here the people of Mu or Ancient Astronauts. Says Prof. Kimura: "There is not a single hint that people have been able to construct such a cult temple in times so long ago. It can only have been done by a people which were highly advanced technologically, compared to other people. We haven't the answer yet, we first have to investigate the site thoroughly." The "Welt am Sonntag" has a precise computer map of the pyramid, and it does not remotely look regular, there are no signs of staircases, and it all looks rather like a gigantic modern quarry. Can natural forces (which have, after all, created such sites as the alleged Bimini-road) really be ruled out? To me, it rather looks like the usual bunch of Atlantis kooks (from Frank Joseph to Robert Schoch), all fanatically driving their agenda, claim something for their theories that they have not even started to properly investigate. Schoch is already pontificating although he has not even seen the pyramid! He's obviously determined to repeat his greatest hit, his dating of the Sphinx. Quite likely, archaeologist will turn away in disgust, and the mystery will not be solved. When do we meet Schoch at Stonehenge, finding it is actually 10 000 years old? It can only be a question of time.

DINOSAURS

- Dinosaur news: * 26 new species of dinosaurs were discovered by Richard Cifelli, University of Oklahoma, at a Utah site. These appear to be relatively late dinosaurs, they all were rather small and fed on shrubs. (Rheinpfalz, 18 October 1997) * The discussion whether birds are descendants of dinosaurs continues. More and more dinosaurs which had feathers are being discovered, (Nature, 6 November 1997) while, on the other hand, American scientists have argued that there are anatomical reasons why dinos are not the fathers of birds. (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 5 February 1998, p. 39) I had thought that this discussion had long ago ended when biologists found that dinosaurs and birds are actually the same group of animals, a view supported by a great Fortean Times (Nr. 111) article on the mythical causes of the extinction of the dinosaurs. When I visited the London Natural History Museum this June, they had loads of books defuting the comet/meteor crash scenario of the doom books. As the FT article stresses, most of the large non-avian dinos had long become extinct well before any hypothetical meteor did hit earth. * The first ever dinosaur found in Italy - at Benevento in the south - is so well preserved that internal organs can be made out. It is the 24cm theropod *Sciopionyx samninus*. (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 27 March 1998, p. 12)